

Raven Rock State Park General Management Plan



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Division of Parks and Recreation

Piedmont Region

JULY 2017

I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

MISSION STATEMENT:

Conservation: To protect North Carolina's natural diversity through careful selection and stewardship of state parks system lands;

Recreation: To provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities in the state parks system and throughout the state; and

Education: To encourage appreciation of North Carolina's natural and cultural heritage through diverse educational opportunities; for all citizens of and visitors to the State of North Carolina.

PURPOSE: The State of North Carolina offers unique archaeological, geologic, biologic, scenic and recreational resources. These resources are part of the heritage of the people of this State. The heritage of a people should be preserved and managed by those people for their use and for the use of their visitors and descendants.

PARK PURPOSE:

Raven Rock, a bluff that juts out at a sharp angle along the Cape Fear River, has been a landmark to river travelers since before the Civil War. As land transportation improved, it became a popular regional destination for picnickers visiting the scenic river vistas and unusual bluffs. Local support for establishing a state park culminated in 1969 when the General Assembly authorized funding for Raven Rock State Park and thus preserved the site's natural and scenic quality from a potential mining operation.



Bluffs

The significant geological resources of the park occur primarily along the Cape Fear River, the dominant surface water feature. Raven Rock, the bluff for which the park is named, is exceptionally tall for the Piedmont, with an elevation of over 100 feet above the river. It is the highest bluff in the North Carolina fall zone – the area where the more resistant rocks of the Piedmont meet the sediments and softer rocks of the Coastal Plain. The rocks forming the bluffs are 570 million years old and were metamorphosed on at least two separate occasions between 450 and 300 million years ago. The river, through millions of years of erosion, has sculpted the numerous metamorphic rock faces seen in the park today. Rapids, a typical river feature in the fall zone, occur at Fish Traps and Lanier Falls.

The significant biological resources include three registered natural areas: Raven Rock State Park Natural Area, Avents Creek-Cape Fear River Floodplain Natural Area, and Granitic Flatrock Natural Area. Successional communities derived from the combination of unique habitats and the interface of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain at the fall zone include maturing communities representative of the eastern Piedmont as well as a number of unusual natural communities. Unusual habitats include the bluffs, flat rocks and north-facing mesic areas with disjunct montane

species. Pines and oak-hickory forest dominate the ridge tops, while mature beech and mixed hardwoods cover the slopes and floodplain. Remnant Piedmont longleaf pine trees and their associates are evidence of past forest types. Buttercup phacelia (*Phacelia covillei*), Virginia spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*) and eastern Isopyrum (*Enemion biternatum*) are representative of the many unusual plant species known in the park. One hundred eighty eight (188) bird species, including the bald eagle, have been observed in the park. Fox squirrels (*Sciurus niger*), a declining species in North Carolina, are found in upland areas of the park. The park is within the historical range of the fox squirrel, but diminishing habitat has reduced the prime range in North Carolina to the public lands in the Sandhills.

Significant scenic resources are found at the Raven Rock bluffs and along the waterways. Unusual rock formations of Raven Rock and wide river vistas have made it a landmark on the Cape Fear River for over a century. The Campbell Creek and Avents Creek areas are particularly scenic because the steep slopes that surround them are more reminiscent of mountain terrains than the Piedmont.

The extensive acreage at Raven Rock State Park is suitable for day-use activities such as hiking and picnicking as well as camping and horseback riding. The Cape Fear River is an exceptional resource for water-based activities such as paddling and fishing. The visitor program focuses on interpretation and education programs. Conveniently located near the Research Triangle, Fayetteville, Fort Bragg and smaller surrounding communities, the park can be easily accessed by a large population seeking natural resource oriented and passive recreational opportunities.

The Cape Fear River is the focus of significant archaeological resources. Prehistoric resources include Pre-Columbian artifacts such as projectile points, evidence that the river was once the site of Native American activities. Before the development of effective land transportation routes, the Cape Fear River played a major role in the growth and development of North Carolina. The 1850's era Northington lock and dam site, which accommodated boat traffic through the fall zone rapids, and the Northington Ferry site, which served as the main transportation link between Raleigh and Fayetteville until the Lillington Bridge was built in the 1920s.

Raven Rock serves as a state park for the protection of its valuable geological, biological, scenic, recreational and archaeological values. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving these values and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of natural heritage of North Carolina.

II. HISTORY

Raven Rock State Park sits along the fall zone, an area where the hard, resistant rocks of the foothills give way to the softer rocks and sediments of the coastal plain. The underlying rocks of the area were formed more than 400 million years ago by intense heat and pressure.

Through the ages, flowing waters and swirling winds gradually eroded the land, carving and sculpting Raven Rock. This immense crystalline structure rises to 150 feet and stretches for more than a mile along the Cape Fear River. The rock was originally called Patterson's Rock named after an early settler who found refuge there when his canoe capsized nearby. In 1854, the name was changed to "Raven Rock", inspired by the sight of ravens that formerly roosted on rock ledges.

The Siouan and Tuscarora Indians hunted the area until European settlers arrived in the mid-1700s. The first settlers were primarily hunters and trappers who were searching for high country similar to their native country, Scotland. Later, stores, mills and quarries were built. Many of the woodlands were farmed, and as the forests returned, much of the land was harvested for timber.

A road that stretched from Raleigh to Fayetteville crossed the Cape Fear River via the Northington Ferry and served as the major transportation route in the area. Locks and dams were built along the river to facilitate navigation by boat, and Raven Rock became an important landmark for river pilots. After a hurricane destroyed the locks and dams in 1859, the structures were not replaced; railroad transportation eliminated the need for river travel. As roads were built, the ferry was closed and Raven Rock became a popular recreation spot. The remnants of the Northington lock and dam can still be seen in the park.

In 1965, interest grew in preserving the area as a state park, and local citizens organized support for the project. In 1969, a bill establishing the park was passed in the General Assembly. More than 220 acres of land were purchased and another 170 acres were donated by Burlington Industries.



Overlook

III. THEMES AND INVENTORY

Themes

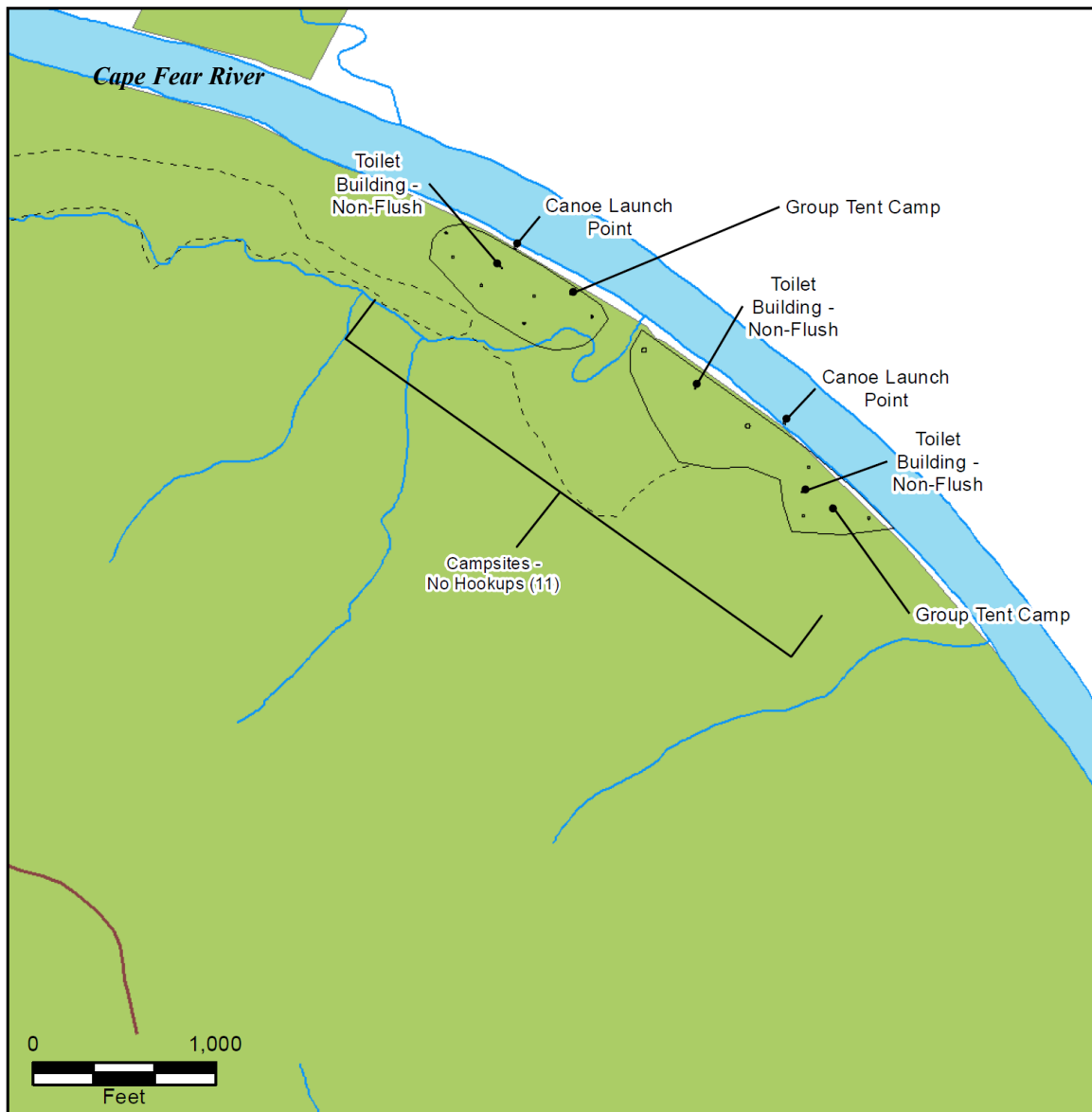
The significant archeological, geologic, scenic, recreational and biological resources of North Carolina should be represented in the State Park system. These resources, as cited in the State Parks Act, are divided into subcategories called resource “themes”. There have been 108 themes identified that should be protected to preserve representative examples of unique resources. For this GMP only themes that are of high significance to this Park (or SRA) are shown.

Raven Rock State Park Theme Table

Theme Type	Theme	Raven Rock Significance	State Parks System Representation
Archeological/Historic	Cemetery	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Recreation	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Rural-Domestic	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Transportation	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Burial/Cemetery	High	Moderate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Campsite/Activity Area	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Shelter/Cave	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Underwater	High	Adequate
Biological	Granitic Flat rocks	Little	Adequate
Biological	Low Elevation Cliffs and Rock Outcrops	Moderate	Adequate
Biological	Piedmont and Coastal Plain Mesic Forests	High	Adequate
Biological	Piedmont and Coastal Plain Oak Forests	High	Adequate
Biological	Piedmont and Mountain Floodplains	Moderate	Adequate
Biological	Piedmont and Mountain Dry Coniferous Forests	Little	Little
Biological	Upland Seepages and Spray Cliffs	Little	Moderate
Geological	Cliffs	High	Adequate
Geological	Dissected Uplands	High	Adequate
Geological	Faults, Joints, and Related Features	Little	None
Geological	Fluvial Depositional Features	High	Adequate
Geological	Gorges, Rapids, Waterfalls	High	Little
Geological	Intrusions	Little	Adequate
Scenic	Caves/Cliffs	High	Little
Scenic	Forests	Moderate	Adequate
Scenic	Rivers	High	Moderate
Scenic	Rock Outcrops	High	Little
Scenic	Scenic Vistas	High	Moderate

*See the System wide Plan for references to Theme and inventory terms. Themes have both actual and “potential” future needs to be at a park.

FACILITY INVENTORY RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



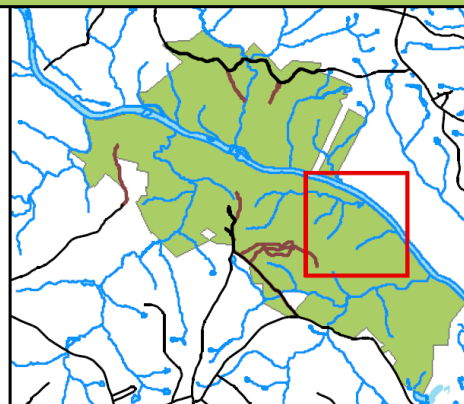
Raven Rock State Park Facility Inventory

Campground Area

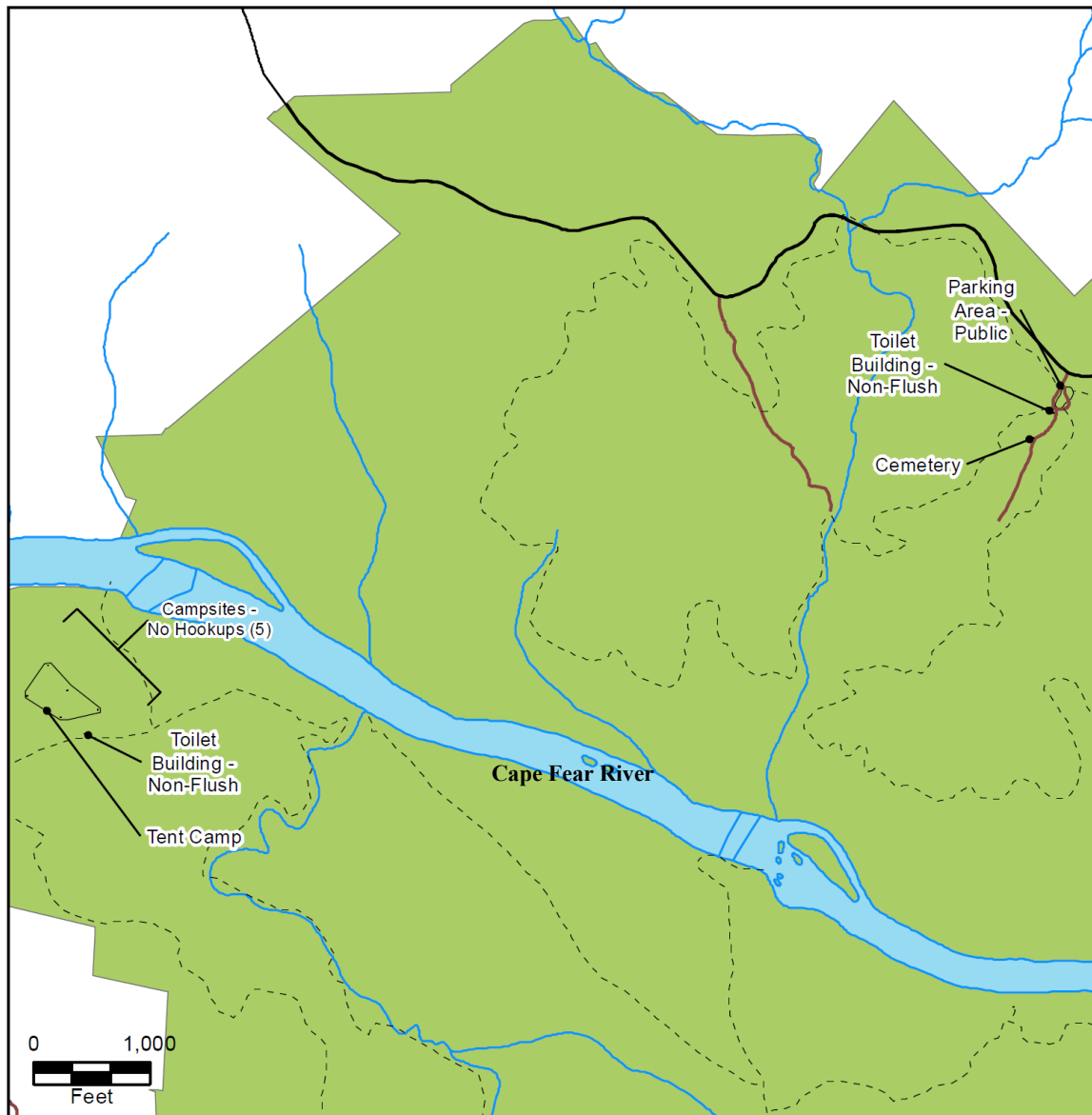
August 2015



- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit



FACILITY INVENTORY RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



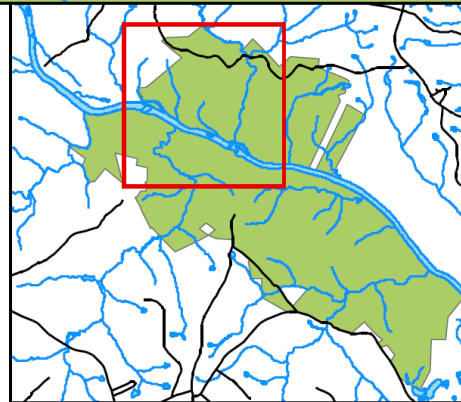
Raven Rock State Park Facility Inventory

Primitive Camp/Bridle Trails

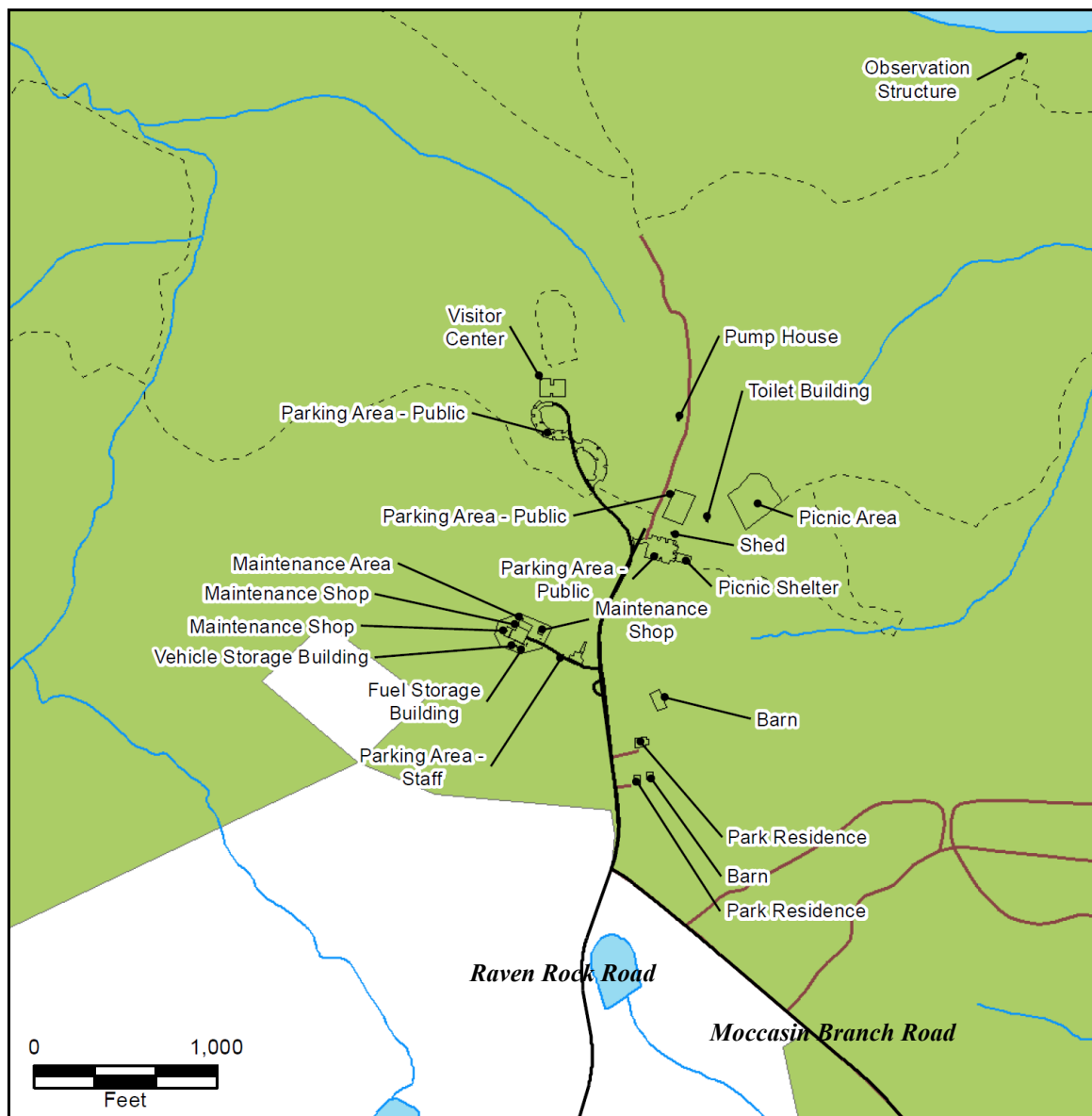
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- Existing Trail
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FACILITY INVENTORY - VISITOR CENTER AREA RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



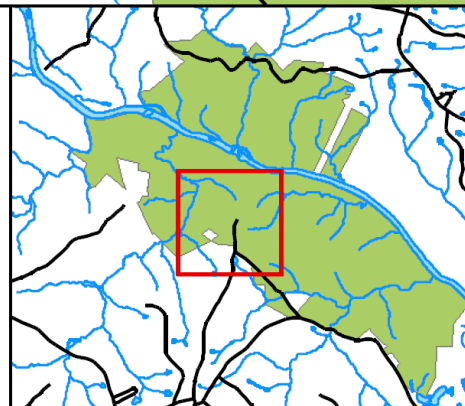
Raven Rock State Park Facility Inventory

Visitor Center Area

August 2015



- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit



TRAIL INVENTORY RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK

Trails Inventory	Hiking	Equestrian	Mtn. Bike
American Beech Trail	0.50		
Campbell Creek Loop Trail	5.00		
East Loop Bridle Trail	4.00	4.00	
Fish Traps Trail	0.60		
Group Camp Trail	0.40		
Lanier Falls Trail	0.20		
Little Creek Loop Trail	1.50		
Longleaf Loop Trail	0.20		
Mountain Laurel Loop Trail	6.60		6.60
Northington Ferry Trail	0.90		
Raven Rock Loop Trail	2.60		
West Loop Bridle Trail	4.00	4.00	
Raven Rock SP Totals (miles)	45.00	8.00	6.60

TRAILS:

American Beech Trail: The Raven Rock State Park Trail follows an easy 0.50-mile loop along the American Beech Trail.

Campbell Creek Loop Trail: 5.00 miles of moderately difficult hiking trails that features a waterfall. The trail offers several activity options and is Accessible year round.

East Loop Bridle Trail is accessible from River Road. The trails can be used by both hikers and equestrians. However, the majority of users are horse owners.

Fish Traps Trail is a 0.60-mile trail down to the edge of the southern side of the Cape Fear River.

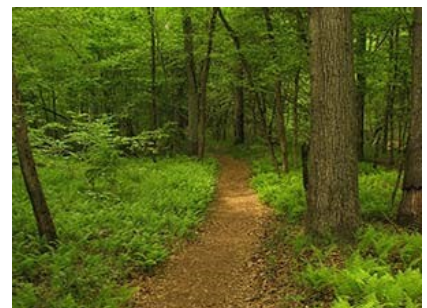
Group Camp Trail is a 0.40-mile trail located along the eastern portion of park. It is a connector trail down to campground.

Lanier Falls Trail is a 0.20-mile hiking trail located on the western side of the park. This is a connector trail that goes down to the Cape Fear River.

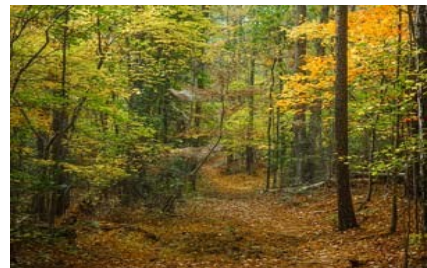
Little Creek Loop Trail is a 1.50-mile trail that links Raven Rock Loop Trail and Group Camp Trail.



American Beech Trail



Campbell Creek Loop Trail



East Loop Bridle Trail

Longleaf Loop Trail is a 0.20-mile trail located on the east side of the Visitor Center.

Mountain Laurel Loop Trail: is a 6.60 mile Loop Trail for both mountain bikes and hikers. The trailhead is located along Moccasin Branch Road.

Northington Ferry Trail is a 0.90-mile trail that travels from the end of the unpaved road down to the Cape Fear River.

Raven Rock Loop Trail –This 2.60-mile hiking trailhead is located at first parking area by picnic shelter. This tree lined loop trail begins by following Little Creek while continually taking you through mountain laurel, hardwoods and majestic pines. In one mile there are 135 steps leading down to Raven Rock and once at the bottom you can hike under the 150-foot-high rocks and climb on huge roots and over downed boulders. Enjoy the sights, sounds and reflections of the Cape Fear River before heading back up the stairs to continue on the trail. Once up the stairs take a right and in a half mile is the Overlook. 350 feet above the Cape Fear River the Overlook gives you a bird's eye view of the river, Fish Traps, Northington Ferry and the Avents Creek Access side of the park. Here you will have an opportunity to see bald eagles, osprey, turtles, vultures, beautiful sunsets and a panoramic view of all the changing seasons. It is a 0.75-mile hike from the overlook back to the parking lot.

HORSEBACK RIDING: Undeveloped woodlands on the north side of the river with areas set aside for parking and picnicking offer eight miles of trails for horseback riding. Land adjoining park bridle trails is posted private property.

West Loop Bridle Trail: 4.00 miles of horse trails are rocky in places. This trail system is popular with local groups and access is off River Road on the north side of the park.

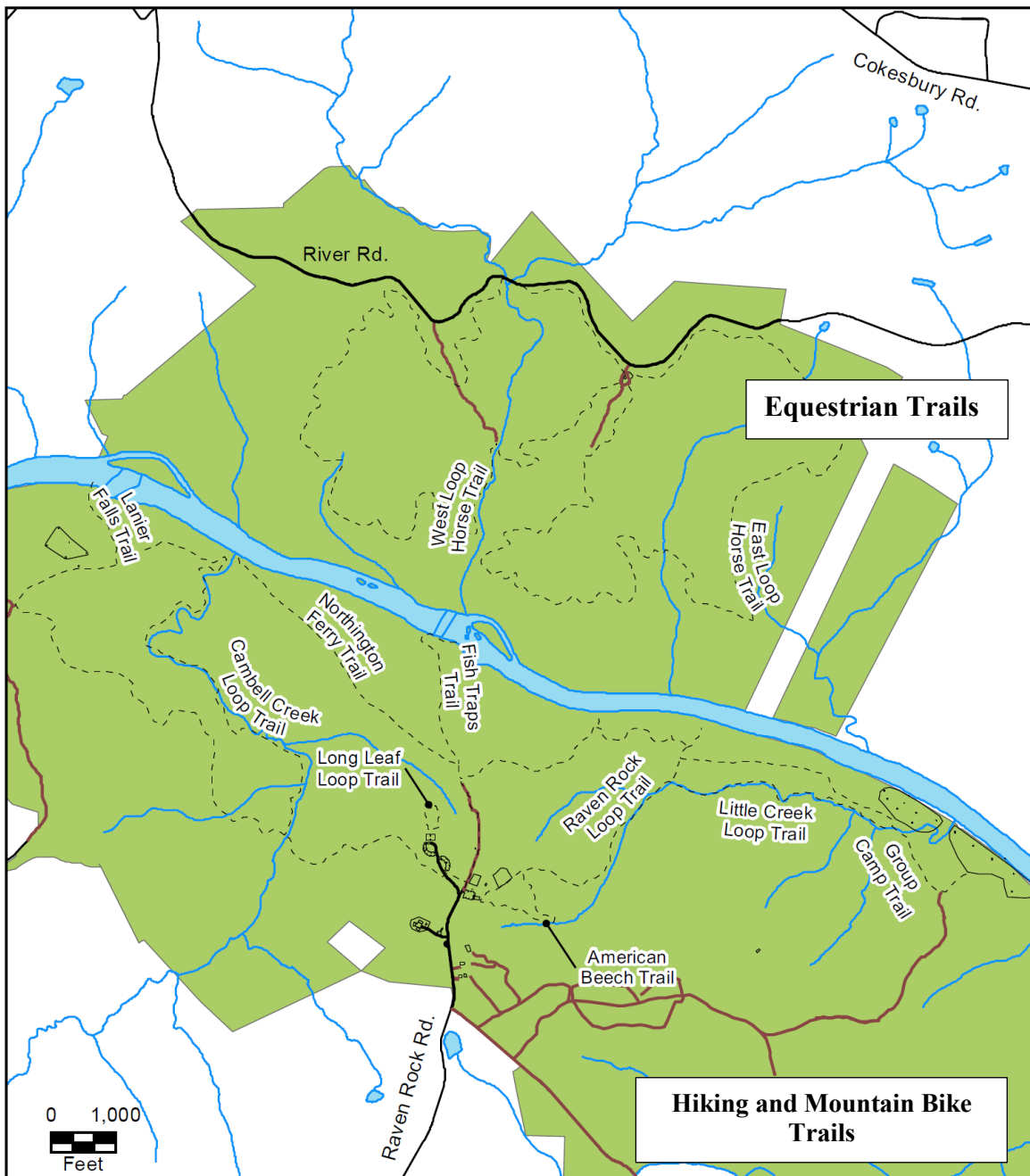
East Loop Bridle Trail: 4.00 miles of horse trails. The trail system is often used by the local citizens and access is off River Road on the north side of the park.

Mountain Bike Trails are currently under construction with a federal grant from Recreational Trails Program and DPR Funds. Project scope of work includes: a trailhead with adequate parking, a 7-mile beginner loop located between Little Creek and Fish Traps on the south side of the park, an intermediate loop system and advanced loop system will expand off of the beginner loop and extend as far as Cedar Rock.



West Loop Bridle Trail

TRAIL INVENTORY RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



Raven Rock State Park Trail Inventory

August 2011



- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit

IV. PLANNING



LAND PROTECTION FOR STATE PARKS

To achieve the highest level of connectivity between park properties already owned by the State of North Carolina, further acquisition of land is expected to take place. Additional land will ensure the maximum protection of natural resources, scenic preservation, outdoor recreation and public access. Each park has several tracts of land that have been distinguished as a future need or a critical need for the park. The following map shows Land Acquisition needs for Raven Rock State Park.



Existing Shelter



Cape Fear River



Parking needed and access areas

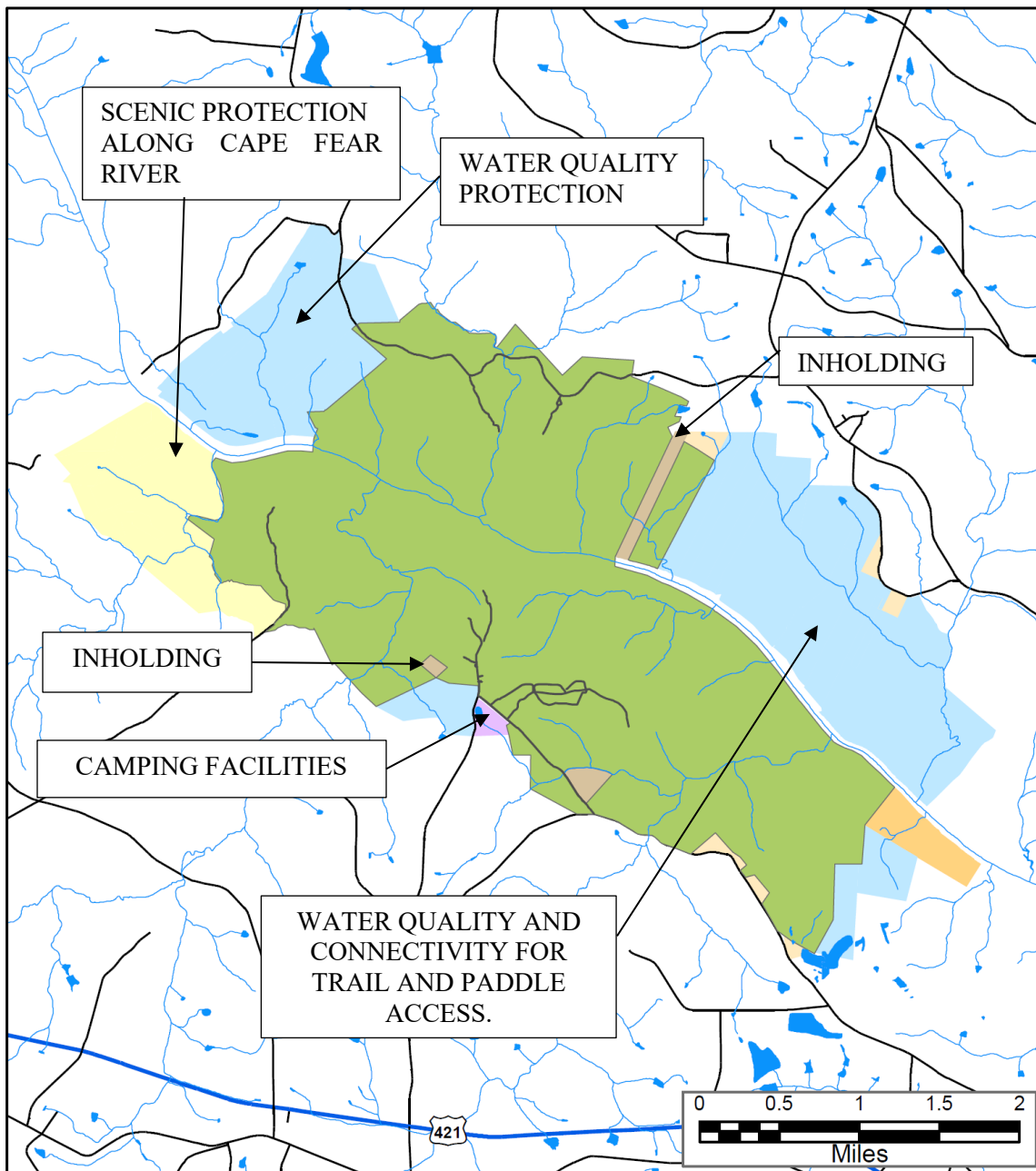


Geological features



Overlook along Cape Fear River

LAND PROTECTION PLAN RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



Raven Rock SP



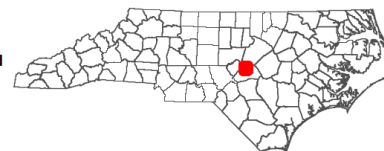
April 2016

Land Protection Plan

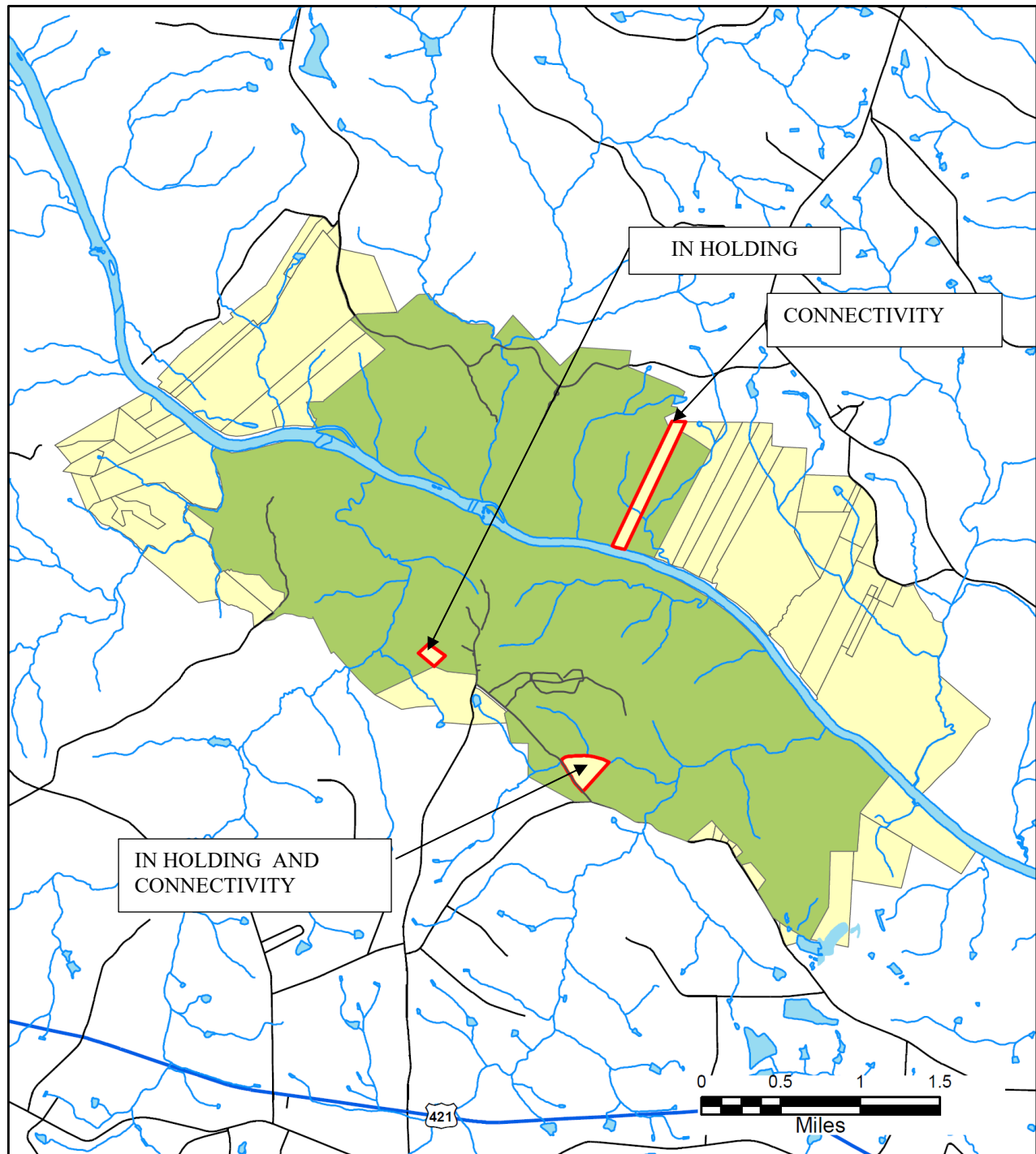
- Primary resource protection
- Inholding
- Scenic protection
- Water quality protection
- Facilities development
- Buffer

Other Conservation Land

- Federal
- State
- Other



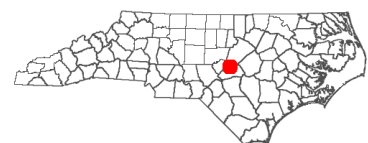
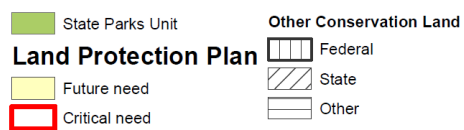
LAND PROTECTION PLAN-CRITICAL ACRES RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



Raven Rock SP



April 2016



PROJECT LIST
RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK

Project	Project Title	Construction Cost Est.
1	Fish Creek/Cedar Rock Mtn.Biking Trail	\$1,029,600
2	Ranger Residence Repair/Renovation	\$172,900
3	Proposed Ranger Residence	\$232,800
4	Jake's Field Campground	\$1,327,500
TOTAL		\$2,762,800

*** Estimated project cost does not include contingencies, design fee, or escalation.*

1. Fish Creek/Cedar Rock Mountain Biking Trail

Existing land within the park east of the main facility area will accommodate the proposed trail to be constructed under the *Fish Creek/Cedar Rock Trail* capital improvement project. The beginner course was completed. A 6.60, single-track beginner mountain bike trail named Mountain Laurel Loop Trail has been completed. Intermediate and advanced loops trail alignment will be flagged for future construction. Minimum of two (2) pedestrian bridges will be needed to cross over Fish Creek. A feasibility study will be done to determine a location for a trailhead with adequate parking near Mountain Laurel Loop Trail.

Staff access will be provided from South River Road (S.R. 1257) up to or close to the trail. Fish Creek/Cedar Rock Trail is not intended to support vehicular traffic, but during emergency situations staff will be able to drive a full size vehicle within close proximity to the trail and then access the trail using a utility vehicle or all-terrain vehicle. Fish Creek/Cedar Rock Trail will offer an hiker the option of a long distance backcountry experience.

2. Ranger Residence Repair/Renovation

Project includes repairs and renovations to a 1,675-sq. ft. two-story frame house built in 1920. Scope of work includes: repair foundation, underpinning, replacing floor joist and other structural repairs, adding a bathroom, and upgrading plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning, and electrical improvements. The project also includes adding a deck and a detached carport.



Ranger Residence

3. Proposed Ranger Residence

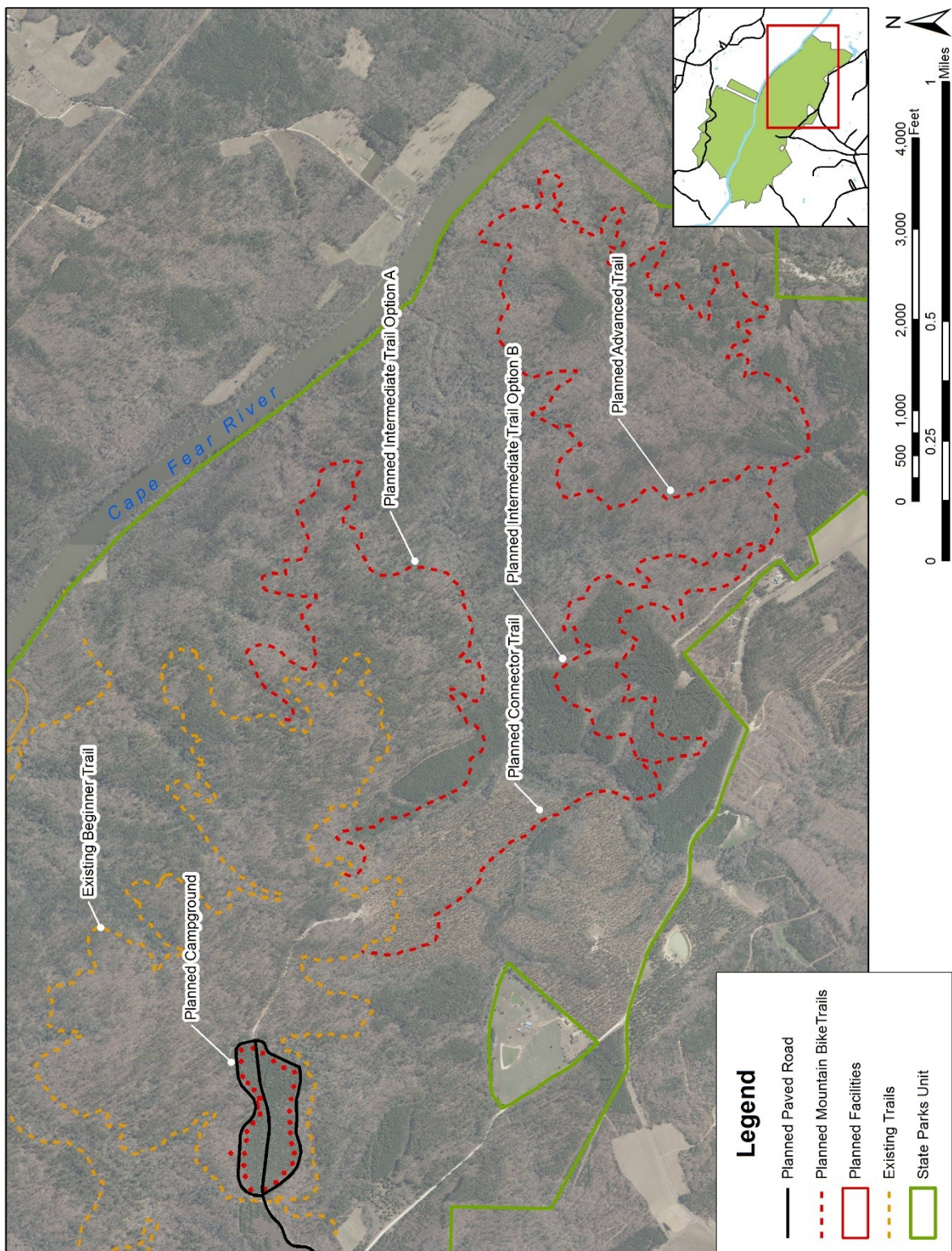
Project includes constructing a 1,700-square foot standard ranger residence with detached carport, septic system, and water and electric line extensions. The residence will be located on the north side of the Cape Fear River within the Avent's Creek Access Area. A suitable ranger residence may be purchased in lieu of this proposed construction as a part of the

land acquisition program. Property and existing residence bordering Avent's Creek access area is currently being investigated.

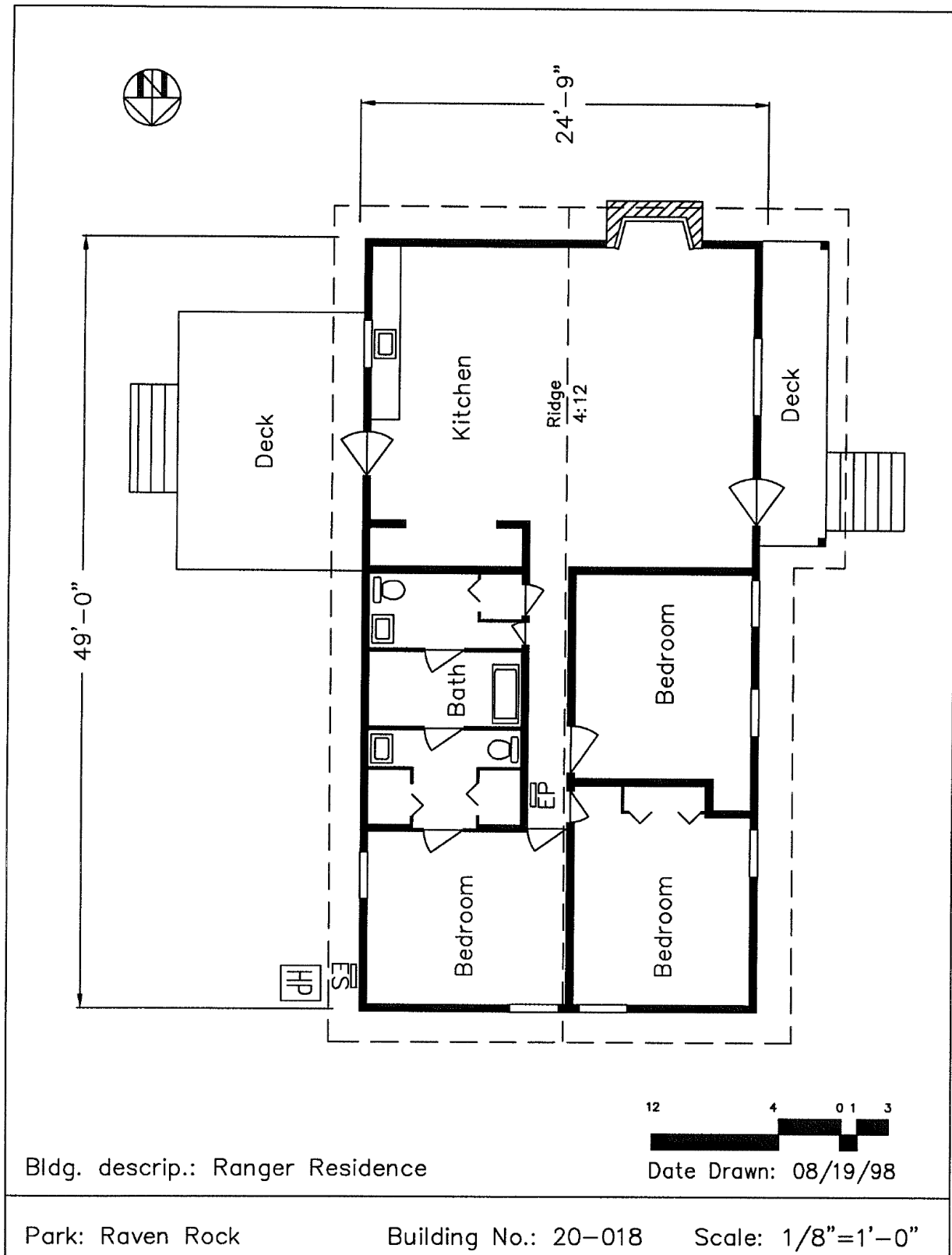
4. Jake's Field Campground

Scope of work includes: the development of a proposed campground for different user groups. The campground will provide 9 full service RV sites on the 15 tent and trailer sites, 6 camper cabins, shower house with parking lot. This will require a waterline, and electrical extensions.

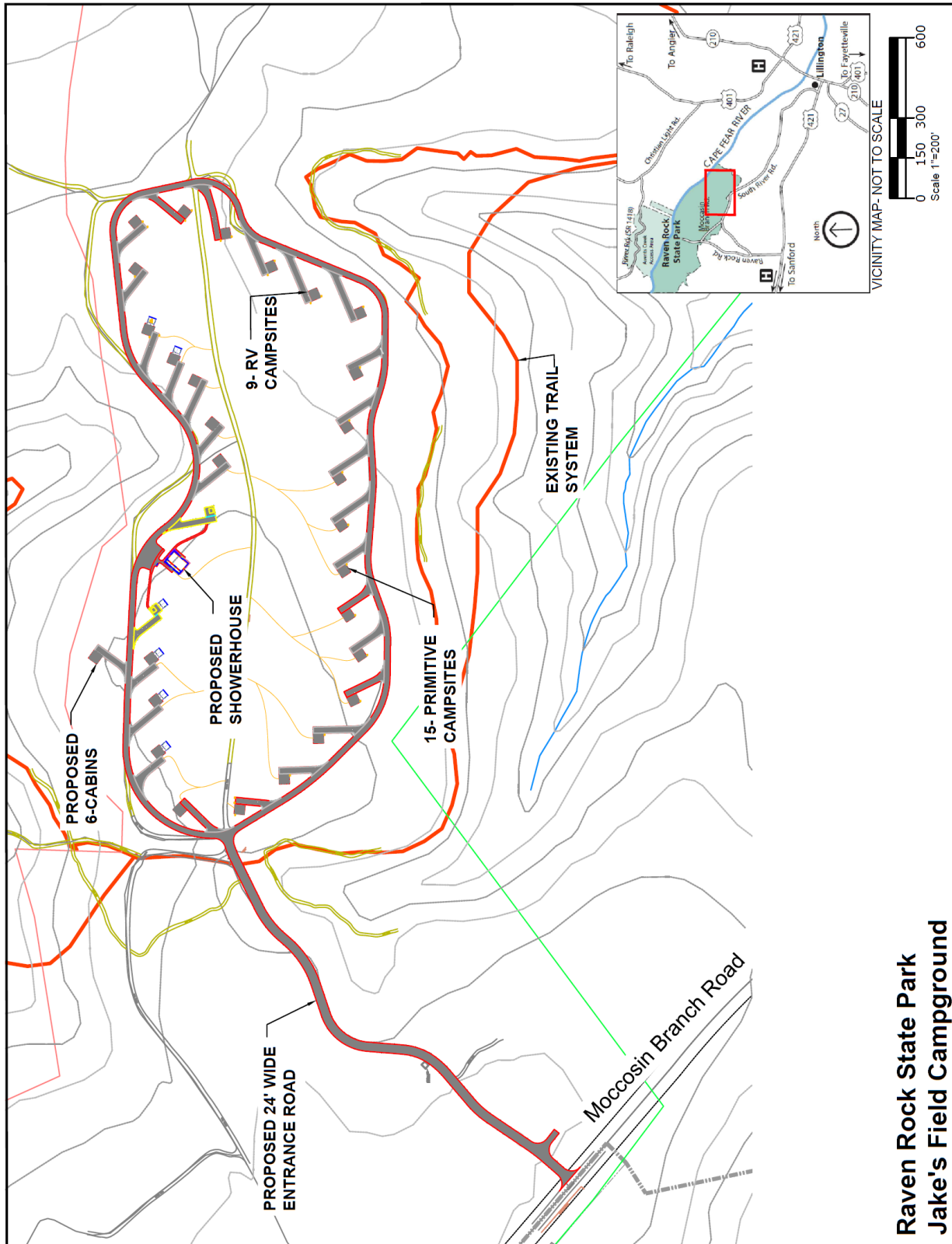
PROJECT #1: FISH CREEK/CEDAR ROCK MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAIL
RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



PROJECT #2: RANGER RESIDENCE REPAIR/RENOVATION
RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK

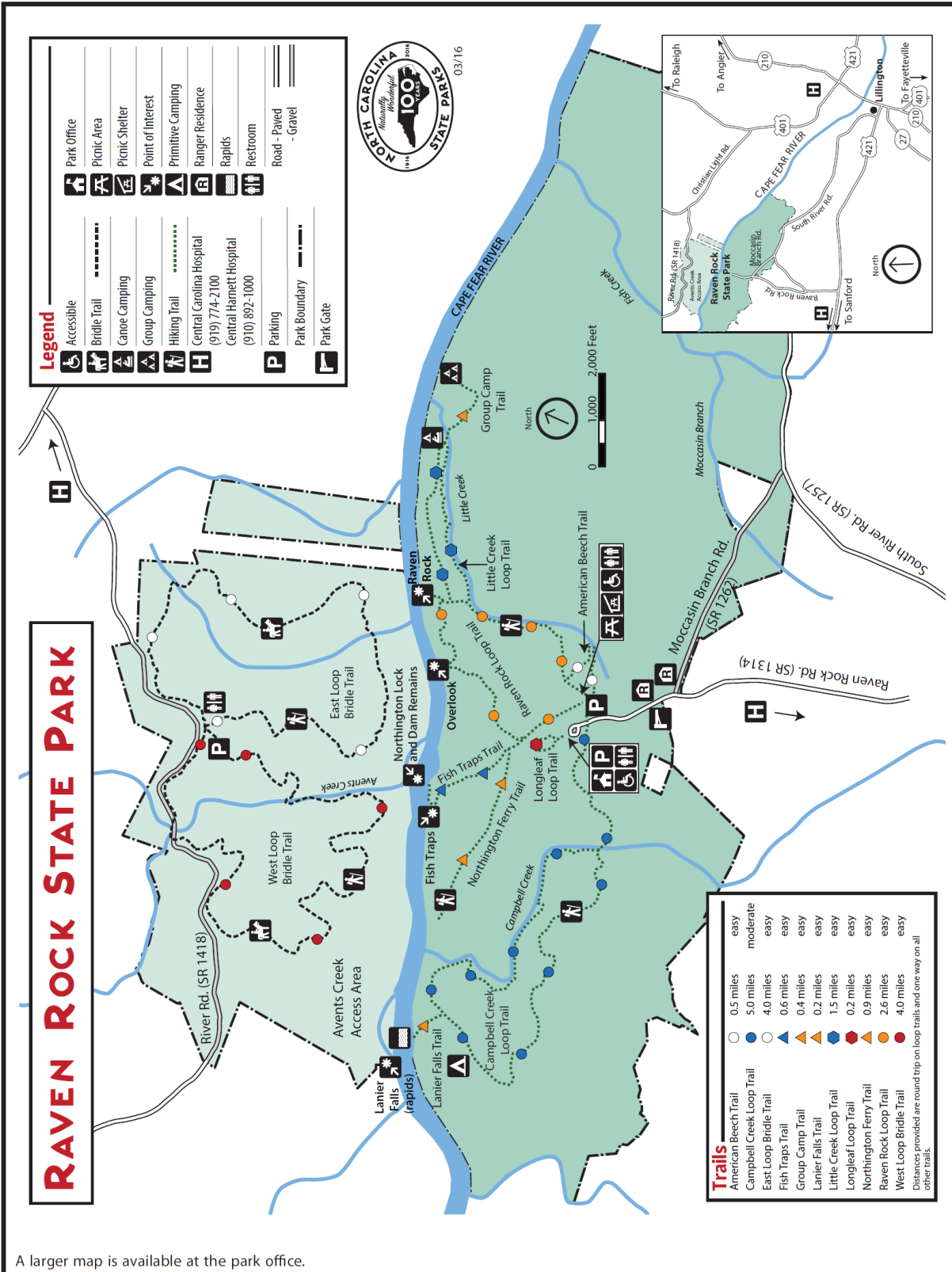


PROJECT #4: JAKE'S FIELD CAMPGROUND
RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



PARK MAP

RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK



A larger map is available at the park office.